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Tuesday's Teen

Davis speaks her truth

ANDREW CRITCHELOW The News-Enterprise

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Amadis Davis speaks last month during the NAACP Martin Luther King Jr./Lottie O. Robinson Sc Community Center in Elizabethtown.

Showing vulnerability in front of strangers often is a difficult task. But for the sake of getting her message across, that is exactly what Amadis Davis of Radcliff did last month at Pritchard Community Center in Elizabethtown.

Chosen as the keynote speaker for the annual NAACP Martin Luther King Jr./Lottie O. Robinson Scholarship fund event, Davis shared her experiences dealing with racism as an Asian American attending public schools in Hardin County.

Davis expounded on the work she believes still needs to be done in the United States to combat systematic, casual and blatant racism.

“A country with a history of oppression is in the perfect position to learn from its mistakes to take on oppression both inside and out,” she said during her remarks. “No matter what political affiliations you have, whether you’re on the spectrum of red or blue or purple or whatever, we have to see that America is flawed. But acknowledging that does not mean that you’re un-American or that America is not great. It means that the greatness of America lies in the possibility to make it so.”

This was the second time Davis addressed the NAACP event. Last year she read an essay concerning the difference between equity and equality in regards to civil liberties. The essay was selected as the winner of the Hardin County NAACP’s annual essay contest in 2019.

For this year's address, Davis said it was important to make her message personal.

"If my experiences – my truth – make someone uncomfortable, they should analyze why they feel that way," she said. "Truth is loud, so I speak mine."

The NAACP event is one of many speaking engagements Davis has participated in over the years. A junior attending Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Bowling Green, Davis also has spoken at events and competitions for The Optimist Club of Radcliff, the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter and more.

"Whenever I speak or write, my goal is for the audience to think," Davis said. "I want people to draw out meaning from what I present, to ask why."

Davis said she ultimately hopes to use these skills to study law and one day pursue a career as a diplomat or judge. Through Gatton Academy, Davis is earning credits toward her undergraduate degree in psychology at Western Kentucky University while completing her high school education.

Previously a student at North Hardin High School, Davis was accepted into Gatton Academy during her sophomore year. The academy is a state-supported, two-year residential program for high school juniors and seniors with an emphasis on STEM.

In Bowling Green, Davis is involved in the Gatton Academy Neurology and Psychology Association and the Western Kentucky Mock Trial Team. She also is pursuing child developmental psychology research with a professor there.

Before attending the academy, Davis served as the chairwoman of the Hardin County Teen Court program.

Davis's mother, Insook, said her daughter has displayed devotion to all these activities.

“When Amadis decides on a goal, she doesn't stop pursuing it,” she said. “She invests as many hours as possible to learn or practice towards that goal.”

To heighten her storytelling prowess, Davis attended the Governor's School for the Arts program last summer at The University of Kentucky. Attending with an emphasis on creative writing, Davis said she learned how to better engage an audience.

“I learned to be vulnerable and that the more personal an experience is, the more universally applicable it is,” she said. “Before, I had believed that relating to an audience meant painting in broad strokes, but now I realize that the small dots of color can bring out a complete picture.”

When it comes to overcoming the nerves associated with public speaking, Davis said it is important to stay motivated by the content of the message.

“Anyone who says they don't get nervous before speaking in front of people is lying,” she said. “I always think about the impact I want my words to have, and how that impact could positively affect my community.”

Andrew Critchelow can be reached at 270-505-1746 or acritchelow@thenewsenterprise.com.



NAACP Martin Luther King Day Speech

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Getting to know Amadis Davis

Hobbies: Playing trumpet, watching makeup tutorials for makeup she “will never wear,” smelling flowers, looking at clouds and “taking bad pictures of cool things.”

Books: “Les Miserables,” anything by Sarah J. Maas.

Television: “The Good Place.”

Film: “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

Music: Hip hop and jazz.

Comedian: John Mulaney.

Food: Pepperoni pizza.

Andrew